

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 7, 2022

Alan Davidson
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
Communications & Information
National Telecommunications &
Information Administration
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Andy Berke
Special Representative for
Broadband
National Telecommunications &
Information Administration
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Davidson and Special Representative Berke,

As you know, the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)* – signed into law last November – invests \$65 billion in critical broadband and connectivity projects nationwide, including \$1 billion for the Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure (EMMBI) program. The Kansas Office of Broadband Development (KOBD), in partnership with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), is applying for EMMBI program funding to expand middle mile infrastructure, reduce connectivity costs, and improve broadband resiliency.

This funding would be a critical component of ensuring universal, affordable broadband coverage for Kansans. Estimates indicate that around 100,000 Kansans have no access to internet at home and a similar number don't have access to internet at acceptable download and upload speeds. Kansas is a rural state with many high-cost areas that lack a wireline provider, so more middle-mile infrastructure statewide would allow non-incumbent providers to enter markets through an open-access model. These new competitive entrants will drive down the cost of broadband to both residential and commercial consumers.

Kansas is also one of just five states in the U.S. that does not have a dedicated fiber optic Research and Education network (REN), leaving our universities at a disadvantage for competitive research grants. Additionally, KDOT has a significant need for fiber construction along primary and secondary freight routes to meet innovation needs outlined in the IKE Program – the state's ten-year comprehensive transportation plan.

Finally, over 85 percent of public safety personnel in Kansas rely on land mobile radio (LMR) that is only partially connected with fiber. Currently, many aspects of these communications utilize microwave connections that do not meet future capacity requirements. Broadband usage by first responders in Kansas has grown exponentially, and middle mile infrastructure expansion will greatly enhance public safety personnel's capability and response time to better protect our state.

As you continue with the rollout of broadband funds passed in the IIJA, we urge your careful review and full and fair consideration of Kansas' EMMBI program application. We stand ready to work with you to ensure broadband access to all Kansans through this historic opportunity.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to be 'S. Davids', with a stylized, flowing script.

Representative Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to be 'J. LaTurner', with a stylized, flowing script.

Representative Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress

Cc: Parul Desai, Director of Congressional Affairs